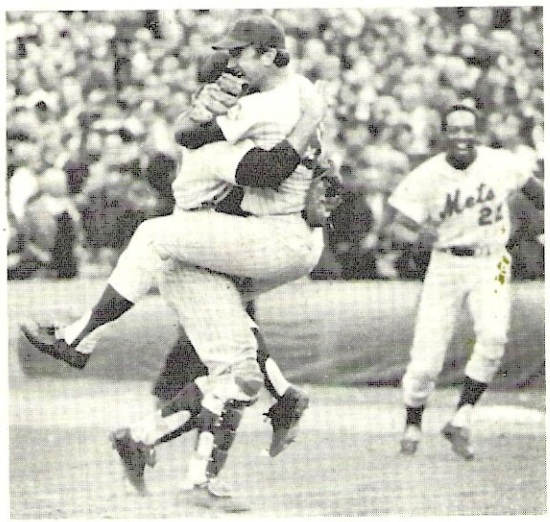
A SIGNET BOOK • Q4210 • 95c

THE YEAR THE METS LOST LAST PLACE

THE MOST AMAZING YEAR IN THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL

BY PAUL ZIMMERMAN AND DICK SCHAAP



8 PAGES OF EXCITING PHOTOS

THE JOKE WAS OVER!

Suddenly, at a few minutes after 3:00 p.m. on October 16, the Mets were World Champions. THE YEAR THE METS LOST LAST PLACE traces the fantastic events of this rise to baseball's summit. Beginning with the crucial nine days in mid-July when the Mets subdued the league-leading Cubs and the hapless Montreal Expos, the authors follow the Amazin' Mets through their stunning playoff sweep of the power-hitting Atlanta Braves, to the incredible string of World Series victories over baseball's winningest team, the Baltimore Orioles.

THE YEAR THE METS LOST LAST PLACE is the story of the New Breed, the new Mets, but it is set against the tragicomic history of the club, against the memories of nine straight defeats at the outset of the Mets' first season, against the memories of Marvelous Marv Throneberry and Rod Kanehl and Elio Chacon and Choo Choo Coleman. It is a book for Mets fans and baseball fans, a book for anyone who cheered for David against Goliath!

THIS IS THE STORY OF LOSERS
WHO LEARNED HOW TO WIN!

Other SIGNET Sports Books
You Will Enjoy

☐ **INSTANT REPLAY by Jerry Kramer.** The runaway bestseller by the offensive linesman of the Green Bay Packers. Jerry Kramer reveals his personal views about pro football. A fascinating and rare glimpse of the behind-the-scenes physical punishment and tensions that exist in this competitive world. (#Y3895—$1.25)

☐ **COUNTDOWN TO SUPER BOWL by Dave Anderson.** The Number 1 book about the Number 1 upset in football history—the saga of SuperJoe and the Jets' finest hour. "The best . . . superb"—Robert Lipsyte, **The New York Times.**

☐ **FRANK GIFFORD'S NFL-AFL FOOTBALL GUIDE FOR 1969.** The brand new NFL-AFL football guide featuring NFL-AFL schedules, team rosters, evaluation of players, the new realignment of leagues, predictions by Gifford, etc. (#N4020—$1.00)

☐ **THE $400,000 QUARTERBACK by Bob Curran.** The inside story of the founding and the first five years of the American Football League. (#Q3967—95¢)

THE NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY, INC., P.O. Box 2310, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10017

Please send me the SIGNET BOOKS I have checked above. I am enclosing $_____(check or money order—no currency or C.O.D.'s). Please include the list price plus 10¢ a copy to cover mailing costs. (New York City residents add 6% Sales Tax. Other New York State residents add 3% plus any local sales or use taxes.)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State_____Zip Code_____

Allow at least 3 weeks for delivery

The Year the Mets Lost Last Place

By Paul D. Zimmerman
and Dick Schaap

Updated

SIGNET BOOKS
A Signet Book
Published by The New American Library

COPYRIGHT © 1969 BY PAUL D. ZIMMERMAN AND DICK SCHAAP

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher, except for brief passages included in a review appearing in a newspaper or magazine. For information address Maddick Manuscripts, Inc., 345 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 72-102873

Published by arrangement with Maddick Manuscripts, Inc. The hardcover edition was distributed by The World Publishing Company, and distributed simultaneously in Canada by Nelson, Foster & Scott Ltd.

SIGNET TRADEMARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES
REGISTERED TRADEMARK—MARCA REGISTRADA
HECHO EN CHICAGO, U.S.A.

SIGNET BOOKS are published by The New American Library, Inc., 1301 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10019

FIRST PRINTING, OCTOBER, 1969

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the following people for contributing material to this book:

Jim Brosnan
Andy Carra
Joe Durso
Larry Fox
Joe Gergen
Richard Gutwillig
Steve Jacobson
Bob Kamman
Jack Lang
Norm Miller
John Monteleone
Bill Quinn
Pamela Susskind
George Vecsey
Art Woodard
Dick Young
Vic Ziegel

COPYRIGHT © 1969 BY PAUL D. ZIMMERMAN AND DICK SCHAAP

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher, except for brief passages included in a review appearing in a newspaper or magazine. For information address Maddick Manuscripts, Inc., 345 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 72-102873

Published by arrangement with Maddick Manuscripts, Inc.
The hardcover edition was distributed by The World Publishing Company, and distributed simultaneously in Canada by Nelson, Foster & Scott Ltd.

SIGNET TRADEMARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES
REGISTERED TRADEMARK—MARCA REGISTRADA
HECHO EN CHICAGO, U.S.A.

SIGNET BOOKS are published by
The New American Library, Inc.,
1301 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10019

FIRST PRINTING, OCTOBER, 1969

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the following people for contributing material to this book:

Jim Brosnan
Andy Carra
Joe Durso
Larry Fox
Joe Gergen
Richard Gutwillig
Steve Jacobson
Bob Kamman
Jack Lang
Norm Miller
John Monteleone
Bill Quinn
Pamela Susskind
George Vecsey
Art Woodard
Dick Young
Vic Ziegel

Contents

Introduction:
Nine Crucial Days ix

One *July 8:*
The Day the Mets Became a Contender 13

Two *July 9:*
The Day Tom Seaver Was Almost Perfect 47

Three *July 10:*
The Day the Mets Relapsed 79

Four *July 11:*
The Day the Mets Collapsed 99

Five *July 12:*
The Day of the Rain 123

Six *July 13:*
The Day Cleon Jones Rested 129

Seven *July 14:*
The Day of the Bleacher Bums 155

Eight *July 15:*
The Day Al Weis Flexed His Muscles 175

Nine *July 16:*
The Day of the Hitters 193

Ten:
The Year the Mets Lost Last Place 213

Photographs following page 112

Introduction

Nine Crucial Days

The idea seemed ridiculous: A crisis in the life of the New York Mets. It was enough to make anyone familiar with the history of the Mets double up in laughter.

* * *

Sandy Alomar.
Shaun Fitzmaurice.
Joe Grzenda.
Joe Moock.
Al Schmelz.

The names ring out—the names of the men who have worn the uniform of the New York Mets. Misspellable names. Unpronounceable names. Forgettable names, matched to forgettable deeds.

* * *

In the first seven years of their existence, from 1962 through 1968, the New York Mets faced a crisis every day. The crisis was not whether they would win, but whether they would live.

Marvelous Marv Throneberry, who impersonated a first baseman for two seasons, might be skulled by a pop fly. Roger Craig, who lost forty-six games in two years, including eighteen in a row the second year, when he felt at home, might be decapitated by a line drive. Elio Chacon, who could play short, second or third with equal risk, might lose his teeth to a ground ball. And the young Ron Swoboda, the brave bull, might pursue a fly ball and gore either himself or any other outfielder who came too close to his horns.

Never in the history of baseball had so many men played so poorly for so long.

* * *

But by June, 1969, the New York Mets, for seven years the funniest team in all baseball—unlike the old St. Louis Browns, the Mets didn't have to use gimmicks like a pinch-hitting midget to draw laughs; they did it on sheer ineptitude—sud-

denly were no longer playing comedy. They were playing baseball, good baseball, and when they won their first eight games in June—after closing May with three straight victories—they owned an eleven-game winning streak, the best of their lives, the best in the National League in 1969.

The eleven-game winning streak gave birth to this book: a look at the Mets under pressure. They had charged into second place, but early in July, they were going to face a dangerous test—nine crucial days, ten crucial games. First, on July 8, 9 and 10, they were going to play single games in New York against the Chicago Cubs, the National League leaders. Then, on July 11, 12 and 13, they were going to entertain the Montreal Expos—the expansion team, the 1969 version of the 1962 Mets—for two single games and a doubleheader. And then, on July 14, 15 and 16, they were going to invade Chicago for three single games against the Cubs in Wrigley Field. If they could hold their own over those nine days, the Mets would establish themselves as pennant contenders. But if they were to collapse, no one would be greatly surprised; after all, they had perfect breeding for a collapse.

This book, then, is an examination of the nine crucial days, minute-by-minute, as reported by more than a dozen different persons, most of them New York newspapermen, one an ex-major-league baseball player, Jim Brosnan, who suffered many indignities during his career, but pitching for the Mets was not one of them.

* * *

As the Cub series at Shea Stadium approached, New York City found itself gripped by a vaguely familiar epidemic—baseball fever. Until mid-1969, most people suspected baseball fever was dead in New York, killed by the New York Jets, the New York Rangers and the New York Knicks, all of whom enjoyed exciting seasons in 1968–69, and by the New York Yankees, who didn't.

The most rabid fans in New York baseball history had always been the followers of the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers, and when the Giants and the Dodgers moved to the West Coast in 1958, their fans were crushed. Many of them simply turned away from baseball; they had always thought of the game as a sport, but the team owners—Walter O'Malley and, to a lesser extent, Horace Stoneham—had convinced them that it was a business. Some of them started going to Yankee Stadium to heckle the Yankees, but

the Yankees won so consistently the hecklers realized they were wasting their efforts. And some of them, in 1962, with the birth of the Mets, turned to the new National League team in New York. They enjoyed the Mets; they could cheer and laugh and, every so often, they could see old favorites, like Willie Mays and Don Drysdale, come into New York wearing San Francisco and Los Angeles uniforms. But they didn't go to the ball park to see the Mets win; there were some crazy fans, but they weren't that crazy. They came to accept the fact that, starting on Opening Day, the Mets' season would run downhill.

But if the Mets stumbled through the mid-1960s, the New York Yankees tumbled, first at the box office, then on the field. In 1961, the last year the Yankees had the city to themselves, they drew more than 1,700,000 spectators. In each of the next five years, as the Mets' attendance steadily climbed, the Yankees' attendance declined, down to a post-war low of 1,124,648 in 1966, the year the Yankees—who had won the American League pennant fifteen times between 1947 and 1964—sank into tenth place. The same year, which was the first year the Mets soared out of tenth place and into ninth, the National League New Yorkers drew 1,932,693 fans.

Ever since 1965, when they outdrew the Yankees by half a million spectators, the Mets have been *the* baseball team in New York, and the Yankees have been the other team. But neither the Mets nor the other team was able to inspire the kind of passionate interest in baseball that Frank Gifford and Y. A. Tittle and Joe Namath had inspired in football. Not until July 8, 1969, anyway.

Then, for the first time in at least five years, New Yorkers by the millions were talking baseball. Pilots were announcing scores as their planes approached the runways at LaGuardia and J.F.K. airports. Cab drivers were telling their fares about the strengths of the Mets instead of about the weaknesses of Mayor John Lindsay. Businessmen were giving up long martini lunches to rush to the ball park.

It was, to New Yorkers at least, just like the old World Series days, like the days of Babe Ruth and Mel Ott and Jackie Robinson and Joe DiMaggio and Carl Hubbell and Roy Campanella and Lou Gehrig and Frankie Frisch and Duke Snider. Only now the names were Cleon Jones, Tommie Agee and Tom Seaver—all easy to spell, all easy to pronounce, all easy to remember, all New York Mets.

One

The Day the Mets Became a Contender

TUESDAY
JULY 8, 1969

NATIONAL LEAGUE STANDINGS
Eastern Division

	W	L	PCT.	G.B.
Chicago	52	31	.627	—
New York	45	34	.570	5
St. Louis	40	44	.476	12½
Pittsburgh	38	43	.469	13
Philadelphia	36	43	.456	14
Montreal	26	55	.321	25

For the New York Mets in 1962, the first year of their existence, their finest days were rainouts. By their standards, July 8, 1962, was just a typical day's work. They made three throwing errors in one inning, allowed five unearned runs in one inning, lost to the St. Louis Cardinals by fourteen runs, and permitted a forty-one-year-old man to hit three straight home runs against them. Added to the home run he had stroked against the Mets in his final time at bat the previous day, Stan Musial became the first quadragenarian in baseball history to hit four consecutive home runs.

Still, at the end of the long day, even though their record for the season had slipped to 23–59, a percentage of .280, the Mets were only six games behind the Chicago Cubs—which might have been an encouraging sign, except for the fact that the Cubs themselves were in ninth place in the National League, precisely twenty-five and a half games out of first place.

Not until 1967, the sixth year of their history, did the Mets ever win a game on July 8.

8:00 a.m.

For fifteen years, Joseph Ignac of Elizabeth, New Jersey, has not had a winner. In 1954, he cheered the New York Giants to the world championship, but in 1958, when the Giants and Willie Mays fled to San Francisco, Ignac became a man without a team.

He turned, like thousands of National League fans, to Yankee Stadium, the other league, and he pulled for the Chicago White Sox, the Boston Red Sox, the Cleveland Indians, even the Kansas City Athletics, whichever club happened to be facing the New York Yankees. From 1958 through 1961, as the Yankees won three pennants and two World Series, Ignac discovered that Yankee-hating was an exercise in futility.

Logically, when the New York Mets were born in 1962, Joseph Ignac became a follower of futility.

Ignac is not going to work today. The maintenance crew at the Elizabeth courthouse will have to get along without him, but the Mets will not. A white-haired, sixty-five-year-old bachelor, Ignac is going to Shea Stadium. He slips into a plain brown sports shirt and a pair of drab slacks. His socks peek through rips in the stitching of his battered brown shoes.

Fully six hours before game time, he leaves his home to start the two-hour trip to Shea Stadium, first by bus to Man-

game of the season. He walked the bases loaded and his relief pitcher, Ron Taylor, gave up a game-tying home run a few moments later. "After a game like that," says Koosman, as he comes back into his house for a breakfast of eggs and sausage, "I can get a cramp in any part of my body. Even if I just lift up my arm, I feel like I can get a cramp."

For Koosman, most of the early part of the 1969 season was spent in pain. He enjoyed a brilliant rookie year in 1968, winning nineteen games, the most ever won by a Met pitcher, but in 1969, his left arm, his pitching arm, began bothering him during spring training in Florida. In his first start of the season, he was hit hard by the St. Louis Cardinals. In his second start, he was hit hard by the Pittsburgh Pirates. He lost that game, 11–2, and afterward, when reporters asked him what was wrong, he told them wryly, "My trouble is that I'm not getting anyone out."

The trouble, actually, was in a muscle behind the shoulder, and, after winning only one game in April, Koosman did not pitch at all for four weeks. He returned late in May, his shoulder ailment cured, and, immediately, he was effective.

Now, coming into the Cub series, he has permitted only nine earned runs in his last seventy-four innings, an incredibly stingy record. Yet, during that stretch, he has won only four games and lost three, mostly because the Mets have not been scoring runs for him. Koosman is not particularly annoyed by the lack of support. The Mets do not score many runs for anyone. They have only one .300-hitting regular, Cleon Jones, and one .300-hitting part-time outfielder, Art Shamsky. Their lineup is enough to strike courage into the hearts of opposing pitchers.

10:05 a.m.

Joseph Ignac of Elizabeth, New Jersey, walks down the subway steps at Shea Stadium, catching a glimpse of the empty green outfield, and heads toward a general admission gate, where tickets go on sale, for $1.30 each, in two hours. Ignac does not worry about finding a decent seat. He is the first man on line at gate E-4.

11:20 a.m.

Jerry Koosman is ready to leave for Shea Stadium. His wife, Lavonne, herds their twenty-one-month-old son, Michael, and two of the neighbors' children—Lavonne baby-sits each morning—into the Koosmans' Pontiac Bonneville. Koosman has worked out a system so that his wife always fills the tank of their car; the key to the system is a limited amount of driving—mostly to the stadium and back—while the pitcher is at home. "My wife waits till we go on the road," Koosman says. "It makes sense, doesn't it, to have a girl buy the gas? They get better service than a man. For a woman, they wash the windshield and check the battery and everything."

Koosman is a farm boy in New York. He grew up in Appleton, Minnesota, where he learned to play baseball in local beer leagues because his high school wasn't big enough to have a team. He played the outfield, and his brother, Orville, usually pitched. But one day the two brothers collided in the outfield; Orville came up with a broken leg, and Jerry moved into the pitching rotation. He was ready. "I'd been practicing in the top of my father's hay barn," he says.

Red Murff, a Met scout who pitched briefly in the big leagues himself, spotted Koosman in 1964 when the young farmer was pitching for Fort Bliss, Texas, and averaging eighteen strikeouts a game. Murff originally offered Koosman a $1,600 bonus to sign, but when the lefthander held out for more money—some of his army teammates told him he ought to get at least $20,000—Murff kept reducing his offer. Koosman signed, finally, for $1,200. He was a bargain. "I figured," says Koosman, "I'd better sign before I owed them money."

On the way to Shea Stadium, young Michael Koosman climbs all over the car, tugging on his father's right arm, the expendable one. Koosman remains calm, undisturbed by his son's antics. But, as the stadium comes into view, Koosman says quietly, "I've never been so nervous about a game in my life."

12:25 p.m.

Shea Stadium has started to fill with the kids who always come out early to watch batting practice and collect autographs. The batting cage has been wheeled out by the ground crew. Coach Joe Pignatano is hitting grounders to the infield. A second- and third-string catcher with the Dodgers in Brooklyn and Los Angeles, Pignatano spent the twilight of a mediocre career as an extra catcher with the original Mets in 1962. Sal Marchiano, a young sportscaster with CBS, is setting up his camera crew to take pictures of batting practice. Pignatano has not forgotten the early days of the Mets. Worried that a wild throw may kill someone, he persuades Marchiano to move his crew.

The area behind the batting cage is crawling with writers and photographers. "There are more writers here than at Cape Kennedy," says one reporter. Nine hundred miles south, at Cape Kennedy, the Apollo 11 astronauts are one week from blastoff.

"It looks like the World Series," another writer agrees. "Everyone's here."

12:30 p.m.

Howard Cosell, the flamboyant sportscaster for ABC, one of the few television reporters who asks athletes real and difficult questions, finishes an interview with Gil Hodges, the Met manager. Cosell wanders over to the box seats where a group of kids are yelling for Hodges' autograph. He raises his arms high, as if to bless the multitude.

"All right, all right, now listen kids, listen," Cosell intones, in a voice reminiscent of W. C. Fields. "Gil Hodges told me to tell you that right after the game he'll be outside with a ball for each one of you."

Cosell repeats his pronouncement in case anyone in the upper deck has missed it. He has stirred up the kids who are now screaming louder than ever. He acknowledges the screams with a gallant wave.

"I've got to admit it," Cosell says to no one in particular. "I own Shea Stadium. Those kids love me."

12:35 p.m.

Ken Boswell stands in the batting cage. He hits several shots that clear the 396-foot mark in right-center field.

"Beautiful," says Jerry Koosman, waiting for his turn to bat. "Hit two or three of those today." Boswell has hit two home runs all season.

12:37 p.m.

Joe Pignatano has stopped hitting grounders and is chatting with two newspapermen, Phil Pepe of the *New York Daily News* and George Vecsey of the *New York Times*.

"When was your last big game?" asks Vecsey.

"Nineteen fifty-nine," says Pignatano. "The second play-off game against the Braves. I got a base hit, no kidding. Hodges walked. I got a single and Furillo hit one over the middle to win the game. It won the pennant for the Dodgers."

"How come *you* were playing?" asks Pepe. "How come they let *you* hit?"

"Roseboro was out of the game," explains Pignatano, throwing Pepe a dirty look. "The team only had two catchers."

"Who was the pitcher?"

"Bob Rush," says Pignatano. "And after that I only got to play one inning in the World Series."

"So this is your first big game since," says Vecsey.

"Big game? What big game? It's only July 8th. The season is only half over. Geez, you guys make it sound bigger than it is. We've got to win a lot of games. This game isn't any more important than playing Pittsburgh or San Francisco or . . ."

"Yeah, but if you beat 'em," cuts in Pepe, nodding toward the Cubs, "it counts as two wins. One for you, one loss for them."

"Yeah," says Pignatano, "but if they lose to somebody else and we win, it's the same thing."

"But you're not guaranteed them losing unless you beat them."

"Well, that's true. But you still have to win every game. Every game is a big game if you want to think about big games."

"Yeah, yeah, sure," say Pepe.

Pignatano looks at him for a moment. "Ever seen anybody as hardheaded as you?" he says.

12:40 p.m.

Jerry Koosman is taking his final turn in the batting cage. The rest of the Mets turn their eyes away, afraid that Koosman's swing may be catching. He has one hit and nineteen strikeouts in thirty-three official times at bat, but he thinks he is beginning to find his groove. "I've been hitting better," Koosman insists. "Well, actually, better in the last game. The first time up I lined out to the second baseman. The second time I flied out to right field and the third time I flied out to center. That's unusual for me, because I usually strike out." In 1968, Koosman set a major league record for strikeouts by a pitcher.

Satisfied with his batting practice, Koosman walks slowly off the field and through the tunnel leading from the Met dugout to the clubhouse. He stands in front of his locker and removes his soaked sweatshirt—"I perspire more than the normal guy"—and puts on a dry one. Joe Deer, the assistant Met trainer, walks up to him.

"Any time you're ready, Jerry," he says.

Koosman takes his pants off and heads for the trainer's room. The ritual is always the same. Sitting on the trainer's table, he extends his left foot. Deer applies a straight razor to a few hairs on the pitcher's instep. He dips a Q-tip into a bottle of tincture of benzoin and smears it around the instep to protect the skin from the adhesive Deer will wrap there. But, before he puts on the adhesive, Deer applies a square patch of moleskin, a soft rabbit fur, to the side of Koosman's big toe.

"I drag my left foot across the mound when I pitch," says Koosman. "If I don't have all this stuff on it, it gets raw."

Deer wraps a strip of elastic tape around the moleskin patch to fix it in place. Koosman is finished and walks back into the locker room.

Matt Winick, the assistant director of Met public relations, hands Koosman a sheet that carries all of the Chicago statistics for that day. Koosman immediately searches for the figures on Ferguson Jenkins, looking for an edge.

"Three wild pitches for him," says Koosman. "I think I've only got two."

12:45 p.m.

Joe Pignatano keeps talking to George Vecsey and Phil Pepe.

"Gilly drove me to the park," says Pignatano, with a glance toward manager Hodges. "I wouldn't go pick *him* up. Hell no! He drives me every day." Hodges, who alternates driving with Pignatano, pays no attention.

"Do the toll takers recognize you?" Vecsey asks Pignatano.

"What are you talking about? There's no toll takers on the Van Wyck Expressway. The day they start charging tolls I'm getting out of baseball. Sometimes the fans recognize Gilly when we're stuck in traffic. But nobody saw us driving in from Brooklyn today. The traffic was moving too fast."

"Was Hodges nervous?"

"No," says Pignatano. "In fact, Gilly was yawning all the way to the ball park."

"Yawning is a sign of nervousness," says Vecsey, smiling slightly.

"It is," chimes in Pepe.

"That's funny," says Pignatano. "I remember Gilly yawning as long as I've known him."

"That's his outlet," says Vecsey. "He doesn't blow his top very often. So he yawns. I think that's how it works."

"Hmm," says Pignatano. "No kidding?"

12:47 p.m.

Yogi Berra, the most successful manager in the history of the New York Yankees—one season, one pennant and one dismissal—and now in his fifth year as a Met coach, is hitting grounders to the infield. Berra, who once told a crowd that was honoring him, "I want to thank everyone who made this night necessary," has a lingering reputation as a wit, which is largely undeserved. He looks funnier than he talks. Berra also has a lingering reputation as one of the greatest catchers in the history of baseball, which is deserved. He averaged twenty home runs a season over eighteen seasons with the Yankees, and he played in fourteen World Series.

A reporter, whose paper has just shifted him from covering the Yankees to covering the Mets, walks up to Berra and mentions that the Yankees are fascinated by the Met drive—which is stretching things. The Yankees are actually only interested in the Met drive, but it isn't easy to strike up a conversation with Berra.

"Hmmmmph," says Berra.

Yogi thinks for a few seconds. "I guess I'll get to watch most of the doubleheader on television tonight," he says. He means the doubleheader in Baltimore between the Yankees and the Orioles.

"They start at 5:30, right?" Berra says. "We should be done by then."

Inside the Yogi Berra who coaches the Mets lives a Yogi Berra who still manages the Yankees.

12:52 p.m.

The Mets finish batting practice. One by one, they start drifting into the clubhouse. Jerry Koosman sits near his locker. "It was so hot on the last trip," he says, "St. Louis . . . Pittsburgh. This is such a nice day. It would be a damn shame if we didn't win." He gets up, moves across the clubhouse and finally sprawls out on the green clubhouse rug in front of pitcher Don Cardwell's locker. Koosman lies there for forty-five minutes.

12:54 p.m.

Eddie Yost, the third-base coach, sits in front of his locker reading the stock market listings. Yost, nicknamed "The Walking Man" during his long career with the Washington Senators

for his ability to draw bases on balls, came to the Mets at the beginning of the 1968 season with Gil Hodges. Yost was a coach with the Senators when Hodges was the manager there. A graduate of NYU, he is, perhaps, the only coach in the league with a master's degree in coaching. His thesis at NYU: "Pitchers' Sore Arms: Their Cause, Treatment and Prevention."

"Ready for the big game?" a reporter asks him.

"Nrmph," answers the short, balding Yost, his eyes still fixed on the newspaper. Finally, he puts it down and turns to Joe Pignatano and Yogi Berra, his fellow coaches.

"This morning," he says, "Mike, my five-year-old, he comes busting into the house with the biggest damn dog you ever saw. A big black one, part Great Dane, part German Shepherd. The dog had a collar but Mike wanted to keep the damn thing. You shoulda seen my wife. I said, 'All right, Mike, we'll give it some meat but after you feed it you gotta let it go.' We can't keep a dog like that. But when I was leaving, I heard the kid asking my wife for a rope. He wanted to tie up the dog so he couldn't get away."

"Give the kid a dog, for crying out loud," says Pignatano. "Poor little kid wants to have a dog."

"You could get him a cat," suggests Berra.

"A dog," insists Pignatano. "Kids gotta have dogs."

"But what am I gonna do when we go to Florida?" asks Yost.

"Same damn thing I do," says Pignatano. "Bring it over to my sister and say, 'Take care of this for me.' "

"Get him a cat," says Berra.

"I don't know about pets," says Yost.

12:57 p.m.

Two young men unfurl the first banner of the day at Shea Stadium. It reads: METS ARE HOT BUT CUBS ARE ON TOP. The two young men—eighteen-year-old Roland Pierre and fifteen-year-old Dennis Larsen—are from Brooklyn, but they both became Cub fans when Leo Durocher became manager of the club in 1966. They cheer for the Cubs, but they work for the Mets. They are wearing blue-and-orange vendors' uniforms.

1:15 p.m.

Ron Santo, the Cub third baseman, spots the Mets' starting line-up posted in the Chicago dugout. He walks over to it, looks it over carefully, then shakes his head.

"I know Los Angeles won with pitching," Santo says. "But this is ridiculous."

1:20 p.m.

Outside the Cub dugout, Ernie Banks is humming the Met theme song, "Meet the Mets," occasionally singing his own lyrics. "Beat the Mets, beat the Mets," Banks sings. "Come on out and beat the Mets . . ."

Banks is Mr. Sunshine, smiling as usual. Reporters crowd around him, enjoying his performance. After seventeen years in the big leagues, Banks still loves the pre-game whirl of photographers, reporters, kids pleading for autographs.

"What a beautiful day for baseball," he says, as he does before virtually every game. "New York. The melting pot. The Great White Way. What's going on?"

"The Mets," someone tells him.

"What about 'Oh Calcutta?' " Banks asks, referring to the off-Broadway Kenneth Tynan nudity pageant. "Twenty-five dollars a ticket and you can't get a hold of them."

"Don't tell us that beneath that sunshine smile beats the heart of a dirty old man," says one reporter.

"No, no," answers Banks, smiling. "You can't say that. What will all these kids think?"

Finally, someone asks him about the Mets.

"People used to laugh and laugh at the Mets," says Banks. "But not any more. Now they have a good team. They have good pitching and they play together. People laughed a few years ago, but the Mets play together now."

Banks stops and listens to "The Queen of Melody of Shea Stadium," playing a medley on the Thomas Organ.

"That's Jane Jarvis," says Banks, running his hands over an imaginary keyboard. "I remember her when she played at County Stadium in Milwaukee." He smiles broadly.

A reporter asks him what keeps him so exuberant after seventeen seasons with the Cubs, seventeen years without winning a pennant.

"You have to be happy," says Banks, "and sports does it. What kind of world would this be without sports, without baseball?" He raises his bat like a bayonet. "Why, you'd have people at each other all the time."

1:45 p.m.

The teams have finished their batting and infield practice. The scoreboard flashes the starting lineups. The groundskeepers, in Met orange, are putting the final touches on the infield, drawing the batter's box, grooming the mound. Shea Stadium is filled nearly to the last seat.

Down in the far right-field stands, over the Met bullpen, concessionaire #234 prowls through the aisles, yelling: "Soda, soda, get yer ice cold soda. Get yer soda here."

A ten-year-old boy in a Mets cap gets up from his seat and trails the concessionaire. Concessionaire #234 turns to the youngster, holding out his hand for change.

"Don't yell when the game starts," says the boy gravely, giving him nothing. "I want to concentrate."

1:55 p.m.

Leo Durocher slouches in the Chicago dugout, leaning on an outstretched hand, awaiting the start of the game. Durocher spans the history of post-1925, pre-Met baseball in New York. At twenty-two, he was the regular shortstop for the Yankees, a teammate of Babe Ruth; at thirty-five, he managed the Brooklyn Dodgers to a pennant; at forty-five, he managed the New York Giants to a pennant. Blunt, opinionated, excitable, friend of Frank Sinatra and George Raft, baiter of umpires and creator of Willie Mays, Durocher is now, on the brink of his sixty-third birthday, the enemy in New York, the manager of the Cubs.

When Durocher took over the Cubs in 1966, ten years after his last managerial job in the major leagues, he faced a difficult chore. He had a reputation for being able to manage only a winner, and the Cubs were losers. They had finished eighth the previous season. Durocher looked over his material and announced, "This is not an eighth-place ball club."

He was right. By his own definition, Durocher was a nice guy in 1966. The Cubs finished dead last, tenth in the National League. They were the first team in the history of baseball to finish behind the Mets.

But Durocher did not quit, and he guided the Cubs out of the cellar and into third place in both 1967 and 1968. Now, as his Cubs bid for the team's first pennant in a quarter of a century, Durocher is no longer Mr. Nice Guy. He flatly refuses to talk to any reporters before the game.

1:58 p.m.

Jack Lightcap, the Met announcer, delivers the starting lineups over the public address system. The crowd greets every Met name with wild cheers, every name except that of the starting first baseman, Ed Kranepool.

Kranepool is the only current Met who has been with the team since its maiden season. He was brought up at the end of 1962, only seventeen years old, fresh from James Monroe High School in the Bronx, where he had broken the school's home-run record set by Hank Greenberg.

Kranepool was the heart of what Casey Stengel, the first Met manager, once called "The Youth of America," the mythical Met club that would one day win a pennant. But Kranepool was young only in chronology, not in manner. He ran like an eighty-year-old man catching a commuter train. His modest ability to hit became even more modest with men on base. In 1963, when he was only eighteen, teammates considered him "a young fogey," and a banner at the ballpark asked: IS ED KRANEPOOL OVER THE HILL?

But, every now and then, Kranepool showed flashes of the brilliance that had been expected of him. For a few weeks, usually at the start of the season, he would hit over .300, and Met fans, starved for a hero, would rally to him. But then Kranepool would start slipping toward his own level—his own level, according to his career batting average, is .248—and the fans would abandon him. Rumors persisted that Kranepool's attitude was not ideal, that he could have worked harder to break his slumps. The harsher fans called him lazy.

This season, although he has already driven in thirty-one runs, ten more than he did in all of 1968, the Mets still are not in love with him. He is too easy a target for all the frustrations of what Kranepool himself calls "a seven-year losing streak."

Kranepool's name, floating over the P.A. system in the middle of the lineup, the sixth spot in the order, inspires a chorus of boos.

2:03 p.m.

Jerry Koosman walks to the dugout from the bullpen. He has finished warming up. He is sweating, but his blue Met

jacket is buttoned all the way up to the neck. "One thing a shoulder injury does for you," he says. "It teaches you to protect your arm at all times."

2:05 p.m.

Above the field, behind home plate, Bob Murphy, one of the Mets' radio and television announcers, is telling everyone who stayed home from work to watch the telecast that he did the right thing: This is a very important baseball game. Murphy's voice is picked up in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and, for the first time, in Maine. The Met network has been extended to Maine temporarily so that the president of the ball club, Joan Whitney Payson, vacationing at the Elizabeth Arden health farm, can watch the very important game. All three Cub games, in fact, will be beamed to Elizabeth Arden's at Mrs. Payson's expense. She can afford it.

Mrs. Payson, the wife of financier Charles Payson and sister of John Hay Whitney, formerly the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James, does not like to miss her Mets. At the start of their first season in 1962, when she traveled to Greece with her daughter and son-in-law, she had the scores cabled to her. After a while, the news grew so depressing that she fired back a cable: PLEASE TELL US ONLY WHEN METS WIN.

"That was the last word I heard from America," she later reported.

2:07 p.m.

Don Kessinger, the first Cub batter, dumps a perfect bunt toward second base. It bounds past Jerry Koosman. Wayne Garrett, a rookie second baseman, sweeps the ball up barehanded perfectly and, in the same motion, throws to first. Kessinger beats the throw.

Glenn Beckert, an excellent bunter, sacrifices Kessinger to second and, quickly, the Cubs have a runner in scoring position. Kessinger, standing on second base, turns to one of the Met infielders. "Our three and four hitters haven't done anything for us in weeks," he says.

The three and four hitters, Billy Williams and Ron Santo, do nothing now. Jerry Koosman strikes out the lean, graceful Williams with a good fast ball at the knees, then, working carefully to Santo, walks him.

Ernie Banks steps up, first in the National League in good humor and third in runs batted in. The crowd, which has swelled to 55,096, the brink of capacity, grows quiet. But seated behind home plate, a fan in his late twenties, dressed in a white polka-dot shirt and sandals, screams, "Strike him out, strike him out."

Koosman gets ahead of Banks, one ball, two strikes. The fan is standing now, pleading, "Strike him out, Jerry, strike him out."

Koosman fires a fast ball on the outside corner, and Banks swings.

The man in the polka-dot shirt jumps up and down, announcing the result, "See, he did it! He did it!"

Koosman has struck out Banks.

2:16 p.m.

Ferguson Jenkins, his fast ball blazing, his curve breaking sharply, dismisses the first three Met batters on ten pitches. He strikes out two, gets the other man on a harmless infield grounder.

2:25 p.m.

When Jerry Koosman gets a full count, three balls, two strikes, on Randy Hundley, the Cubs' leadoff batter in the second inning, umpire Shag Crawford walks out to the mound to examine Koosman's glove and hands, searching for illegal traces of pine tar. Koosman is clean. "I don't know why he checked me so early in the game," Koosman says later. "That's when I was having so much trouble getting anything on the ball. He should have checked me in the middle innings, when I was pitching better."

Koosman walks Hundley, and, in the stands, Richie Parsons, a Met fanatic from Long Island, drains a beer and begins a private monologue. "Ah, damn, he gave up a walk to Hundley. C'mon, Koos, Hickman's up, let's get a double play . . ."

Hickman slams a hard ground ball toward third. "There's the double-play ball," says Parsons, starting a fresh beer.

The ground ball bounces off the chest of Bobby Pfeil, the forty-first man in eight years to play third base for the Mets. Both runners are safe, and Hickman is credited with a single.

"Aw, c'mon, Pfeil, don't mess up chances like that. I'd like a triple play, but it's not damn likely . . ."

potential new customers for Carl Carson Car and Truck Rentals, not even aware that the Mets are playing an afternoon game against the Cubs. "I just don't get interested in baseball any more," says Throneberry, a sales and public relations specialist, "not till World Series time, anyway." Some of the crueler critics used to say Marv felt the same way when he played for the Mets.

To each new customer he sees, Throneberry hands his business card. Inside the card are the three main telephone numbers of Carl Carson Car and Truck Rentals. The outside of the card has a hole cut in the middle, and through the hole stares a head-and-shoulders portrait of Marv Throneberry in his old Met uniform. The face of the card reads, modestly: EIGHT MILLION NEW YORKERS CALLED HIM MARVELOUS MARV.

3:45 p.m.

With two men out in the top of the eighth, Jim Hickman comes to bat against Jerry Koosman, the old breed Met against the new. Hickman is greeted, familiarly, with boos. He played for the Mets under a strange curse; someone once suggested he had "potential." If he did, he kept it well hidden.

Hickman added nothing to the comedy at Shea Stadium—he didn't drop fly balls; he simply didn't get to them—and little to the drama. Under pressure, in the mini-crises of the past, Hickman always seemed to harm the Mets.

He does it again now in a major crisis. He hits Koosman's first pitch deep into the Chicago bullpen in left field. Hickman trots around the bases, and the Cubs lead, 3–1.

3:52 p.m.

With two out and no one on base in the bottom of the eighth, shortstop Al Weis comes to the plate. If Weis can get a hit —something no Met has managed since Ed Kranepool's home run—manager Gil Hodges will send up a pinch-hitter for the next batter, Jerry Koosman. Koosman, moving up to the on-deck circle, silently hopes that Ferguson Jenkins will retire Weis. Koosman wants to pitch the ninth inning. "I felt bad and I wanted to make up for some of the pitches I'd thrown," Koosman says later.

Weis grounds out to shortstop, pleasing Koosman, disappointing Barbara Weis, a petite brunette who is seated in the lower stands. "You just wait," Barbara Weis tells her in-laws,

Al's parents, who are sitting with her. "The Mets will do it . . . somehow."

At the same moment, Yogi Berra, coaching at first base, calls to Ernie Banks, trotting off the field, "We're gonna get three in the ninth and beat you." Banks does not even turn his head.

3:58 p.m.

Jerry Koosman, still pitching retires the Cubs in order in the ninth inning, and the Mets move in for their final chance. The odds against them seem infinite: Ferguson Jenkins is pitching magnificently, and of the batters coming up for the Mets—a pinch-hitter, Tommie Agee and Bobby Pfeil—only Agee is a proven threat. Yet few fans leave the park; in recent weeks, the Mets have been rallying dramatically. In seasons past, half the crowd would be fleeing to the parking lot, with logic and history on their side.

3:59 p.m.

Walt Michaels, the defensive backfield coach of the New York Jets—the one championship team in New York—sits in his dormitory room at Hofstra College, the Long Island training camp for the football team. Michaels is watching the Mets on television, calmly, all by himself.

4:00 p.m.

Frank Graddock is settled comfortably before the TV set at his home in the Ridgewood section of Queens, not far from Shea Stadium. He is watching the Mets, and, according to later police reports, he has been drinking during the telecast. His wife, Margaret, walks over to the set and switches the channel away from the Met game. It is time for one of her favorite daytime serials, "Dark Shadows," and today she will find out whether Quentin, who carries the curse of the werewolf, will be able to keep the mummy's hand he has pursued through the last few episodes. Frank Graddock doesn't care about Quentin, his curse or the mummy's hand. He wants to see the ninth inning of the ball game, he and his wife begin to argue over the Mets and the monsters.

4:01 p.m.

To start the last of the ninth inning, Gil Hodges sends up a pinch-hitter for Jerry Koosman—Ken Boswell, the regular sec-

ond baseman who has been sitting out the game with a bruised hand. Boswell, a pull-hitter, is hitting .245, normal by Met standards. Yet Boswell has some power to right-center field, so the Cub outfield plays him deep. Ferguson Jenkins works the count on Boswell to two balls, two strikes. The Mets, newly conditioned to expect the impossible, crowd the front steps of their dugout.

Boswell hits Jenkins' next pitch high into short right-center field. Don Young, the Cub center fielder who plays mainly on the strength of his fielding, hesitates for a moment, waiting for the ball to come out of the haze and background of white shirts in the crowd. He hesitates too long. As he charges in and Don Kessinger and Glenn Beckert pedal back, the ball falls to the ground. Second base is left uncovered, and Boswell alertly stretches his pop fly into a double. The Cubs have committed a combination mental-and-physical error straight out of Met tradition.

4:04 p.m.

On "Dark Shadows," Quentin is faced with an agonizing decision: Should he keep the mummy's paw or return it in exchange for advice from Angelique, a witch, on how to shake the werewolf's curse? Margaret Graddock wants to find out, but her husband insists upon watching a baseball game. She switches the channel; he switches back to Shea Stadium.

4:05 p.m.

With Ken Boswell at second base and the huge crowd chanting for a rally, Tommie Agee, the strong, powerful Met outfielder, slashes a ball past third base, just foul. Ferguson Jenkins misses the plate with his next two pitches, and catcher Randy Hundley goes to the mound to settle him down. In the Cub dugout, Leo Durocher, outwardly unworried, sits with his legs crossed. Agee hits Jenkins' next pitch straight up, and Ernie Banks drifts over by the Met dugout and makes the catch for the first out. Cleon Jones watches from the dugout steps. His mind drifts back to a game earlier in the season, when the Mets came from behind and beat the Atlanta Braves.

4:07 p.m.

Gil Hodges pulls out Bobby Pfeil and sends up Donn Clendenon to pinch-hit. A restaurateur in Atlanta in the off-season,

Clendenon has, he confesses, "a propensity for striking out." He holds the National League record with 163 strikeouts in a single season. But he also has a propensity for hitting a baseball great distances.

Clendenon moves his hands up on the bat. While a home run would tie the game, Clendenon is hoping mainly to keep the mild rally alive, trying to get the bat on the ball, looking for a single or a double. He drives Ferguson Jenkins' first pitch foul down the right-field line. The next pitch, a curve ball, misses the inside corner.

Jenkins takes a deep breath and throws. Clendenon swings and lines the ball deep toward the left-field wall. The drive sinks, falling short of a home run, and Don Young, the Chicago center fielder, racing full speed, reaches out and snares the ball before it can hit the wall. But Young, the ball resting tentatively in the webbing of his glove, cannot brake. He slams into the fence. The ball pops loose.

Boswell, forced to wait at second to see if the ball will be caught, moves only to third. Clendenon reaches second. The tying runs are in scoring position, and the fans at Shea Stadium are screaming.

4:08 p.m.

Margaret Graddock is screaming, too. She wants to see "Dark Shadows." On the show, Angelique, the witch, is explaining how she was once bitten by a vampire.

Frank Graddock screams back at his wife and starts hitting her, too, the police say later. Reportedly, Frank Graddock punches his wife in the head and body. Angelique, the witch, is about to strangle a man to death. Cleon Jones is about to come to bat.

4:09 p.m.

Cleon Jones moves from the on-deck circle to the plate. He has been hitless all day, still looking for his 100th base hit of the season; he started the day leading the National League in batting, but his average has slipped a few points. "You gotta get a hit now," Jones tells himself. "If you don't, you'll kick yourself all the way home in the car. It's time to do your thing."

Donn Clendenon leads off second base. "Don't get picked off," he tells himself. "If I ever get picked off in front of all these people, I'll kill myself."

Jones watches the first pitch. It is low. Then Ferguson

Jenkins throws a curve, which failing to break, hangs over th plate. Jones cracks the ball on a line over third base and int the left-field corner. Before Billy Williams, in left field, ca chase the ball down, Ken Boswell and Clendenon have scored tying the game, and Jones is standing on second base.

The Met players, pouring out of their dugout, devour the tw runners, pounding their backs, shaking their fists defiantly a the Cub dugout.

Leo Durocher emerges, walks to the mound, and talks t Jenkins. He leaves his ace in the game.

4:10 p.m.

Walt Michaels' room at Hofstra College is now filled wit Jet football players, yelling and shouting, most of them pullin for the Mets. They are almost as excited as they would be if Jo Namath, temporarily in retirement, walked into the trainin camp.

4:11 p.m.

Leo Durocher, after consulting with Ferguson Jenkins, order the Mets' clean-up hitter, Art Shamsky, deliberately walked setting up a possible double-play situation. But the next batter Wayne Garrett, grounds softly to second base, and Glen Beckert has to make the play at first, allowing the runners t move up to second and third.

The next batter is Ed Kranepool, greeted by cheers, partly redeemed by his home run.

"C'mon, Everitt," shouts Jack Wakefield, a professiona comedian who is sitting behind home plate, a dedicated fa who often treats Met pitchers to dinner after winning perform ances. "C'mon, Everitt."

Wakefield turns to the people around him. "He hates th name Everitt," says Wakefield. "I call him that to get him ma enough to get a hit."

Kranepool may have regained stature in the eyes of Met fan by his home run, but he has not convinced the Cubs. Rathe than walk him and face J. C. Martin, the Met catcher, Duro cher and Jenkins decide to pitch to Kranepool.

4:13 p.m.

Frank Graddock is watching the Mets on his television se His wife, Margaret, is lying in bed, nursing the injuries sh

legedly suffered trying to get to see "Dark Shadows." Her sband concentrates upon the game, unaware that his wife fatally hurt, unaware that he will be charged the following ay, with first-degree murder.

14 p.m.

d Kranepool lugs a 36-ounce bat to the plate, several nces heavier than the one he customarily uses. A heavier at has helped the hitting of both Cleon Jones and Donn lendenon. "You can't argue with success," Kranepool says ter.

Ferguson Jenkins' first pitch is high. Kranepool watches the ext one for a strike and misses the third.

The crowd is on its feet. Kranepool digs in. He notices that hortstop Don Kessinger is playing him towards second base, eaving lots of room through the left side to the infield. Krane- ool is expecting an outside pitch—but not the one Jenkins hrows him. It is outside and low, and Kranepool fooled, prac- ically throws his bat at the ball. The bat connects. The ball loops out toward left field, over the head of Kessinger.

Cleon Jones dances down the line, jumping every few feet, s he scores the winning run. Jerry Koosman, suddenly the inning pitcher, is the first to greet Jones, hugging him, lift- ng him off the ground. Mets hug each other all over the ield. In the record books, it will read simply as a 4–3 victory ver the Chicago Cubs on a July afternoon. But, for the Mets, t is, for an instant, the seventh game of an imaginary world eries.

Upstairs, in the television booth, announcer Lindsey Nelson screaming. "It's absolute bedlam. You could not believe it. It's absolute bedlam."

In the stands, Barbara Weis points her finger at her in-laws. "See," she says. "I told you they'd do it . . . somehow."

Near Barbara Weis, in a beige-and-brown sleeveless dress, Lavonne Koosman sits, tears streaming down her face and smearing her make-up.

4:20 p.m.

Joseph Ignac of Elizabeth, New Jersey, heads out of Shea Stadium, starting his two-hour trip home. Never once, in his eight seasons of cheering for the Mets, has he felt so good. For the first time, he doesn't miss Willie Mays quite so much.

4:22 p.m.

The Met clubhouse is alive with cries of "Attaboy, attaboy," uncommon in a professional baseball locker room. The club house policemen are working furiously to cope with the floo of reporters trying to fight their way to the happy players.

"Passes, passes," one policeman calls. "Any ringers here Any ringers?"

Cleon Jones, Donn Clendenon and Ed Kranepool are de layed, busy chatting on the Mets' post-game television show "Kiner's Corner," with the host, Ralph Kiner, a home-ru hitter turned broadcaster. The press focuses on Jerry Koosman who is sitting, dazed, in front of his locker, mumbling, "Un believable, unbelievable."

Koosman gulps down a can of Rheingold, brewed by th Mets' sponsors, and drags on a cigarette. "They were mar velous," he says, indicating his teammates. "I was wild all day I felt sure of myself, but I didn't have good control. I wa battling myself."

The home-run pitches to Ernie Banks and Jim Hickman Koosman says, were both fast balls—slow fast balls. "My bes fast ball," he says, "would have gotten there two feet sooner."

"Do you think the club's going all the way now?" says on reporter.

"Pardon?"

The reporter repeats the question.

Koosman smiles, and, playing the game, replies, "I don't se why we just can't keep on winning and winning."

4:23 p.m.

In the Chicago clubhouse, Don Young the outfielder, is dress ing as fast as he possibly can. "If I value my life," he tell himself, "I'll get the hell out of here."

Several of the Cub players, like friends paying a con dolence call, drift over to Young's locker and tell him to forge about the two mistakes he made, not to worry about them. A few suggest that he get himself a drink quickly.

Back in the manager's room, Leo Durocher is opening u to reporters. "That kid in center field," he says to the Chicag writers. "Two little fly balls. He just stands there watching one and he gives up on the other." Durocher flavors his remark with his choicest obscenities, and Durocher is a master of th idiom.

"If a man can't catch a fly ball," Durocher says, "you don't deserve to win."

The manager glances toward Ferguson Jenkins, who is slumped in front of his locker. "Look at him," Durocher says. "He threw his heart out. You won't see a better-pitched game. And that kid in center field gives it away on him. It's a disgrace."

4:29 p.m.

Ron Santo, the Cub third baseman, is no more charitable than his manager. "He was just thinking about himself, not the team," says Santo, angrily, referring to Don Young. "He had a bad day at the bat, so he's got his head down. He's worrying about his batting average and not the team. All right, he can keep his head down, and he can keep right on going, out of sight for all I care. We don't need that kind of thing."

Santo slams his spikes against the floor. "I don't know who Leo has in mind to play center field," he says, "but I hope I can sell him on Hickman. Any ball Jim reaches, you can bet your money he'll hold onto."

4:35 p.m.

Cleon Jones has returned from the post-game show and now, in response to questions, he is reliving the ninth inning. "The Cubs went out there patting their pockets when they took the field in the ninth," says Jones. "They were already started to count that twenty-five grand." He smiles, thinking himself of the potential share for each championship player in the upcoming intra-league championship series and the World Series.

"Banks, he talks to you all the time," Jones says. "He kept saying to me over and over, 'That Jenkins, he can really pitch.' I didn't give up. Nobody gave up. This is a young club and it believes it can win. We've got the momentum now."

Jones looks toward Tom Seaver, who is scheduled to pitch for the Mets tomorrow. "We beat their big man," says Jones. "Now we've got our big man. We're in command now. We can relax."

"Hey, don't save the fireworks until the ninth inning for me," says Seaver. "I'll take a 9–0 lead in the first inning any time. I'll finesse it the rest of the way."

4:37 p.m.

Ron Santo is still fuming in the Chicago locker room. "It ridiculous," he says. "There's no way the Mets can beat us. Ju no way. It's a shame losing to an infield like that. Why, wouldn't let that infield play in Tacoma."

4:42 p.m.

The Met locker room is starting to thin out. Ed Charles, veteran third baseman who saw no action, is chatting with couple of reporters. "If we can only just hang close to the Cub until September . . . ," he says.

4:43 p.m.

Ferguson Jenkins has no abuse for Don Young. "With a those people here on a bright day," the pitcher says, "the cen ter fielder is in a constant battle with the sun. I thought Youn recovered quickly. After all, he had to find it before he coul chase it." Young doesn't hear the words in his defense. He ha fled from the clubhouse.

4:50 p.m.

Harold Weissman, the publicity director of the Mets, a ver serious reformed newspaperman, is standing with Jerry Koo man. "What an ending, what an ending," says Weissman, st dazed.

Then, thinking about the heart attack Gil Hodges suffere late in the 1968 season, Weissman says, "What do you thin Gil's doctor said about that finish?"

"Maybe we'd better pay to have the doctor here," say Koosman, kidding.

"Yeah," says Weissman, his face totally serious. "Yeah

5:10 p.m.

At Camp Drum in Watertown, New York, Sergeant Der McKinley Harrelson is getting ready to umpire a softball ga between two teams of Army reservists. When he isn't putti in his two weeks of summer training, Sergeant Harrelson is Harrelson, the regular shortstop for the New York Mets.

Sergeant Harrelson is umpiring because he fears that, if played softball, he might lose his batting groove. It is not one

the greatest grooves of baseball—Harrelson, an accomplished fielder, is a confirmed .220 to .240 hitter—but it is the only one he has.

"Your club scored three runs in the ninth and won," somebody says.

Harrelson laughs. He is used to being kidded in his outfit. The previous week, when the Mets won six out of nine games from St. Louis and Pittsburgh without him, his army buddies teased him about his indispensability. Harrelson is a pleasant young man, and he takes jokes well.

"Sure, we got three in the ninth," he says. He had heard earlier that the Mets were losing, 3–1, going into the ninth.

"Hey, sarge," someone else yells from the barracks. "You won, 4–3."

Suddenly, Harrelson realizes he is not being kidded. He breaks into a big grin and, in fatigues, begins umpiring a meaningless softball game.

6:00 p.m.

Ed Kranepool walks into the bar at Tavern on the Green, a restaurant in Central Park. He is accompanied by Howard Cosell, the sportscaster, who is going to interview him on ABC-TV's 6:30 news.

As the two men enter, the bartenders begin to applaud.

Cosell nods gently, presuming, as he always does, that the cheers are for him and his syntax.

"Champagne, Mr. Kranepool?" says one of the bartenders.

"Hm," says Kranepool. "Just straight Beefeaters on the rocks, with just a touch of vermouth."

Kranepool will save the champagne for the World Series.

[illegible] p.m.

[illegible] Clendenon notices a crowd around the entrance to his [illegible] on West 58th Street. He recognizes no one, but as [illegible], the people cluster around him, slapping him on [illegible], cheering him, congratulating him. "These people," [illegible] himself, "they're talking pennant fever too early for [illegible]

[illegible] p.m.

[illegible], the third-base coach who waved Cleon Jones [illegible] the winning run, returns to his house. He looks

quickly around the house. To his relief, he sees that the huge black dog that haunted his morning has been returned to its owner.

"I can't see having a pet," says Yost. "Not with us going to Florida in the spring for seven weeks."

7:30 p.m.

At the Dragonseed Restaurant in Queens, Albert "Rube" Walker, the round, cheerful pitching coach of the Mets, is eating dinner with Verlon "Rube" Walker, the round, cheerful third-base coach of the Cubs. The two brothers do not talk much about the game or about the pennant race. Later, when Albert "Rube" is asked if he and Verlon "Rube" might split any potential World Series share, the Mets' Walker says, "Hell, no. I'm not going halves. I need the money more than he does."

7:38 p.m.

The other New York team loses the opening game of a twi-night doubleheader and falls eighteen and a half games out of first place.

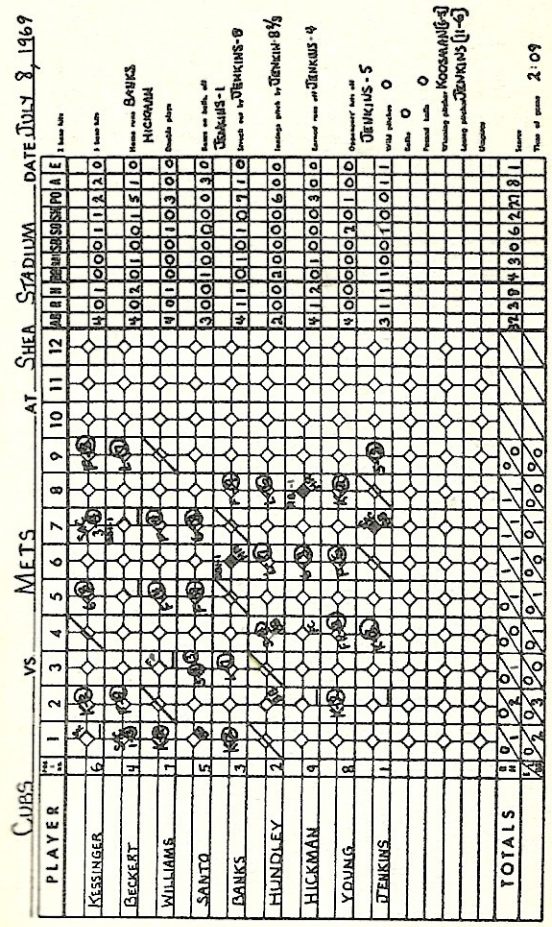
7:45 p.m.

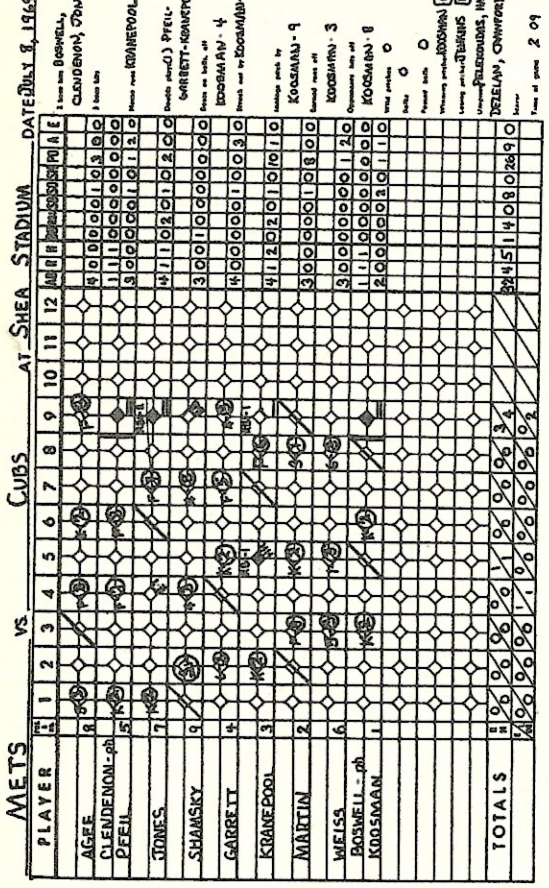
Phil Rizzuto, who broadcasts the games of the other team, is interviewing Mrs. Babe Ruth between the halves of the doubleheader. It is "Babe Ruth Day" in Baltimore, and Mrs. Ruth is talking about her husband's birthplace, which has been turned into a museum.

Rizzuto, once the Yankee shortstop, still clings to the Yankees, but Mrs. Ruth is more up-to-date. She is a Met fan. "I think they're adorable," she told a reporter only yesterday. "I love every one of them. I cry when they lose and I laugh when they win."

7:50 p.m.

In a room at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan, Rich Nye, a young left-handed pitcher, is trying to cheer up his Cub roommate, Don Young. But, although he has had a couple of drinks, Young is still depressed. He has been a professional baseball player since he was seventeen, in 1963, but he has never hit .300, not even in the Pioneer League or the California League or the Texas League. His batting average with the





Cubs now has sunk to .228, and his glove has betrayed him. His phone rings. Rick Talley, a Chicago columnist, is calling. Talley wants to know if Young lost Ken Boswell's pop fly in the white shirts of the crowd.

"I don't know," says Young. "I don't know."

Did his performance at the plate—two strikeouts and two pop flies—affect his defensive play?

"No," says Young. "I just lost the game for us. That's all."

Talley finishes the interview and taps out his column: "Young has a history of 'getting down' on himself. He is not a confident ballplayer. He has been happy with the Cubs, but never quite believed it and always seemed to be wondering when it was going to end. It may have ended yesterday."

10:22 p.m.

The other New York team loses the second game of a twi-night doubleheader and falls nineteen and a half games out of first place.

11:00 p.m.

The first edition of the *New York Times* goes on sale on the streets of the city. The story of the Mets' rally is on the front page of the newspaper. The Mets have been on the front page before, but only once for winning a ball game, way back in 1962, when, after nine consecutive defeats, they scored the first victory of their existence.

"Some people still might not believe in us... but then some people still think the world is flat."

Cleon Jones

It began to happen on July 8, nine crucial days, two series with the Cubs that marked the incredible surge of the N. Y. Mets to the top of the baseball world. Written in the incomparable style of **Dick Schaap's INSTANT REPLAY**, this super thriller goes on to cover the Mets' climactic 4-1 World Series triumph, the most exciting in baseball history.

The 1969 baseball schedule called for twenty teams to play each other in two major leagues. To the sportswriters, the bookmakers and the fans in nineteen cities, the season was being played strictly for the record. It was Baltimore in the American League and St. Louis in the National, with a possible bid from Leo Durocher's fired-up Cubs. The Mets? What about them? With a little luck and some decent pitching, they could make it to third place in the Eastern Division. This is the definitive story of how the METS confounded the experts in their year of destiny.

THE NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY PUBLISHES SIGNET, MENTOR, CLASSICS & NAL BOOKS